DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 519 SP 017 073

AUTHOR Kroen, William C., Jr.
TITLE Developing Skills in the Social Studies.
PUB DATE Oct 80
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development: Demonstrations (Educational): Drills (Practice): Elementary Education: Learning Processes: Mastery Learning: *Sequential Approach: Sequential Learning: *Skill Development: *Social Studies: Student Evaluation: Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Social studies teachers face pressures from demands for greater emphasis in the areas of multicultural aspects of the world population, expansive technological changes, citizenship and moral education, and accountability for basic competence. The latter demand offers an opportunity to return to the broad perspective of teaching students not "what to learn" but "how to learn." A student should be able to inquire, investigate, evaluate, and assimilate. A systematic approach for identification of teaching goals, precision in developing strategies to meet these goals, and an evaluation process that reflects what the student has learned is needed. This need can be satisfied by using teaching strategies that develop basic skills for greater learning and academic progress within the social studies. A sequential teaching strategy incorporating these elements includes demonstration, practice, and evaluation components. Clear presentation of skills, an opportunity to practice them, and accurate appraisal of their performance is necessary for maximum skill development. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED195519

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
William C. Kraen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 017 073

October 1980.

DEVELOPING SKILLS in the SOCIAL STUDIES

Until relatively recent times, in Social Studies curriculum development in America most goals and objectives could be continued under the heading of "good citizenship." A social indoctrination of American History, a sampling of geographical terms and a survey of various countries would suffice to meet these aims. During the 1960's and early 1970's a trend toward greater social consciousness and awareness training was clearly in evidence. As we enter the 1980's Social Studies Teachers find themselves in the midst of pressures being brought to bear on a call for greater emphasis in the areas of; multicultural aspects of the world population; expansive technological change; the new citizenship/ moral education combined with a national demand for accountability for basic competence.

Should we now splinter our curriculum into a myriad of disciplines to meet these needs? Should we standardize our curriculum to set norms on competency?

The call for accountability offers us the opportunity to return to the broad based perspective of teaching our young people not "what to learn" in the Social Studies but rather "how to learn." The "how to learn" does not call for an abandonment of content within the Social Studies, but rather, it provides a basis for developing those skills that will lead to a better equipped Social Studies student. A student who will be able to inquire, investigate, evaluate and assimilate within the context of being faced with such overwhelming demands on his/her learning time and ability.

For the teacher, the call for competency mandates the need for a purposeful focus on three areas (1) a systematic approach for the identification of goals, (2) a need for precision in the development of strategies that are process oriented to meet these goals and objectives and (3) and, an evaluation process that truly reflects and involves the learner within the process. There is no salient need for wholesale restructure of curricula, materials, or teaching modalities. But rather, the need could be satisfied by careful organization of the classroom in order to develop the basic skills that will create the basis for greater learning aptitude and subsequent academic progress within the Social Studies.

Skills are processes or methods that enable a child to learn more readily and to acquire information. We should look at the role of skills as links in the process of learning. As a youngster acquires more and more skills his learning aptitude is expanded. Simply stated, he/she has more tools to work with. Learning theories are often encumbered with mystical, unquantifiable processes that provide little practical guidance to the teacher. On the other hand skills development is realistic, measurable and is in fact a bona fide essential of learning itself.

....continued

Organizing the Classroom for Skills Development

Let's look at the practical aspects of beginning a basis skills program within "your classroom." The first consideration one must take in regard to skills acquisition is that they are developmental in nature. That is, one skill must be mastered first before others will be able to be mastered. For example, a youngster must be able to find direction using a compass rose before before he will be able to tackle longitude and latitude problems. Thus the teacher must sequence the skills to be learned. The planning phase for skill development should include an appraisal of where to begin with your students - - What skills they already have mastered? If your goal is to have an understanding of longitude and latitude it would be imperative that each student at least be able to demonstrate the position and functions of the cardinal and intermediate directions.

With your goal in mind order a sequence of skills that will provide the desired effect. Remember that your sequence is not written in stone and that some skills will overlap and some may require a great deal of persistence. Your skills of individualizing your instruction will play an important part in how well your program succeeds. Remember, the term "slow learner" inherently implies the element of time.

There are many ways and a myriad of strategies that could be employed in developing skills. But the three key components of any skills development program are (1) Demonstration, (2) Practice and, (3) Evaluation.

....continued

(1) Demonstration -

Clearly show what the skill is, how it will be used, and how its use leads to further utility. Taking our example of teaching longitude and latitude, let's take a walk through of how the concepts involved in the use of the cardinal and intermediate objectives might be introduced.

The following method has been used with success:

(1) Show the class a map of the United States. Locate the compass rose and show how it indicates general direction. Show how your locality relates direction rose from other areas.

(2) Using tape, place a compass rose on the floor of your classroom. By going to the windows and noting where the sun rises and sets the children will be able to help orient the compass.

(3) Place signs marked "N "E" "W" and "S" on the walls of the classroom at the appropriate positions as well as the intermediate direction of "NE", "NW", "SE", and "SW".

4) Make little cards with such directions as - "From the compass rose - walk North West five paces - what did you find? The child will write down an object that

....continued

(4) continued

is located at his/her destination such as the pencil sharpener or the waste paper basket.

The game is enjoyable but it also will give you a clean idea if the basic skill of recognizing direction has been acquired. The youngsters will have a foundation by which to begin showing their map skills in a formal sense.

The demonstration phase should emphasize clarity. Show how the skill is performed in as many ways as possible. Spend the needed time with students who are having difficulty while other youngsters work on such problems as , "In what direction would you be traveling if you went from:

.New York to Los Angeles _____

.Boston to St. Louis _____

Chicago to Dallas _____

The movement to mapping should flow directly with no interruption from other areas within your social studies curriculum. It is better to teach skills as a package at first than to integrate as mastering occurs.

II Practice -

Most youngsters did not ride a bike perfectly the first time out. With practice, proficiency and confidence are gained and the skill acquired. Social Studies skills are no different.

....continued

Structure your strategies to provide a varied and comprehensive approach to reach the desired skill. Worksheets, practical application andinterdisciplining approaches are just some of the means used to provide this practice. Carefully plan your activities to build on learned skills that will lead to the performance of more difficult tasks. It will become readily apparent to you when your students are confident of an acquired skill. They will not only be performing the skill well but will be incorporating their learning into other areas such as their vocabulary and their approaches to other curricula.

III Evaluation -

Unit tests are often self-defeating. For one thing, they often connote finality. In other words they give the feeling that "well, that's over with" and we don't need to know that any more" . Another is that these tests are impersonal and may not really reflect whether or not the skill has been learned. Unlike other areas within the Social Studies curriculum, skills almost dictate that evaluation be done on a personal basis.

One method that provides both an accurate appraisal of skill development and offers the student a share in his learning process is the Personal Skills Inventory.

For each student make a list of the desired skills and write them in behavioral terms. The list should be sequential, understandable and not so extensive as to create

 ....continued

anxiety. Provide a check off section to indicate mastery by both you and the student. An example of a personal skills inventory might look like this:

ROBERT MARSHALL GRADE 5

Mapping	1st Week	
Skill	Robert	Mrs. Jones

As the student performs the assigned tasks, carefully monitor his/her progress. At specific intervals hold a conference with the youngster to find out the personal skills inventory and plan

....continued

either remediation or further development based on the observed progress.

The overall thrust of skills development should be coordinated on a school wide basis in order that sequential development takes place throughout the entire elementary school experience.

With the development of competency tests becoming more and more prominent in all phases of the school experience, the need to know how to develop skills will be more critical. It is hoped that the common sense approach to skill development as outlined here will provide a basis by which you, the teacher, can chart your own program for effective skills development within your classroom.